

LODGEPOLE PINE DISCOVERED AND MISNAMED

N. T. MIROV¹

Lodgepole pine was first collected by Mertens on Sitka Island, Alaska. Here is the story of the discovery of this pine.

Mertens (Alden & Ifft, 1943) was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1796. He studied medicine at the University of Göttingen. In 1824 he left Germany for St. Petersburg, Russia, hoping for a position with Captain Kotzebue's around-the-world expedition. He did not get the job, but went instead to the southern part of Russia where he practiced medicine. Eventually, in 1826, he was appointed as a botanist-zoologist with Captain Lutke's around-the-world expedition sponsored by the Russian Government. Lutke, himself, was a scholar who later headed both the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Imperial Geographic Society. Besides Mertens, Lutke had with him a geologist, Postels, and an ornithologist, Kittlitz.

During the expedition, which covered both the north and the south Pacific, Mertens made an extensive collection of plants—mostly from the tropical parts of the world. He died in St. Petersburg in 1832. Several species and one genus have been named in his honor.

Mertens' collections were turned over to Henri Gustave Bongard who was evidently of French parentage. Bongard was born in 1786, also in Germany (in Bonn). Like Mertens, he was a physician with a degree in surgery received from the University of Vienna in 1810. Later he moved to St. Petersburg, Russia, passed an examination for doctor of medicine, and entered practice, but only to keep body and soul together. Botany had been, since his childhood, his true love. At last, in 1823, he became a professor of botany at the University of St. Petersburg, which position he occupied until his death in 1839. As a taxonomist, Bongard is known by his monographs of Brazilian plants. The genus *Bongardia* is named after him.

When Mertens' Alaskan collection was turned over to Bongard, he found among the 222 collections made at Sitka, many of which were new species, a specimen of a pine which ultimately came to be recognized as *Pinus contorta* Loudon, commonly called lodgepole pine. Bongard, who was brought up in northern Europe where there are only two species of pines for the whole expanse of Northern Eurasia (*Pinus sylvestris* and *P. cembra*), apparently assumed that the eastern American species included in Lambert's monograph (1828) might easily occur in Alaska. Moreover, I suspect from Bongard's description of this Sitka pine that Lambert's beautiful folio with its artistic colored plates, was considered too authoritative to be contradicted. In 1828 Bongard, in a paper on the plants of Sitka Island, misidentified Mertens' Sitka pine as *Pinus inops* Aiton,

¹ Contribution from the California Forest and Range Experiment Station, which is maintained by the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of California, Berkeley, California.

which is just another name for *P. virginiana*. He was somewhat uneasy, however, about the appearance of the Sitka pine cone, which had "spinae squamarum parum breviores, quam in icone Lamberti laudata."

In 1825 David Douglas collected lodgepole pine near the mouth of the Columbia River in Washington, and his specimen was quite properly described by Loudon (1838) as a new species. *Pinus inops* of Bongard (not Aiton) then became correctly known as *P. contorta*, but we should remember that once—for a short time—lodgepole pine was known as *P. inops*.

Berkeley, California.

LITERATURE CITED

- ALDEN, ROLAND H. and JOHN D. IFFT. 1943. Early naturalists in the Far West. Occas. Papers of the Calif. Acad. Sci., page 38.
- BONGARD (HENRI GUSTAVE). 1833. Observations sur la vegetation de l'île de Sitcha. Memoires d'Academie Imperiale des Sciences de St. Petersburg. 6^{me} Serie, Tome 2. St. Petersburg, page 163, No. 143.
- LAMBERT, AYLMER BOURKE. 1828. A description of the Genus Pinus illustrated with figures, directions relative to the cultivation and remarks on the uses of the several species, etc. Second ed. in two volumes. Vol. 1, p. 21, No. 11. London.
- LOUDON, J. C. 1838. Arboretum and Fruticetum Britannicum etc. Vol. 4, p. 2292, fig. 2211. London.

REVIEWS

Handbook of Plants of the Colorado Front Range. By WILLIAM A. WEBER. vi + 232 pp., 78 figs. 1953. University of Colorado Press. \$5.00.

Both professional and lay botanists have long been in need of a satisfactory guide to the Colorado flora. The standard manuals for the Southern Rocky Mountains are out of print and difficult to obtain. They also are considerably out of date, and difficult for the layman to use. On the other hand, available popular handbooks are so incomplete in their treatment as to be of relatively little value. In this handbook an attempt is made to be sufficiently complete to satisfy the needs of the serious student, and at the same time to make the keys and explanations sufficiently simple to encourage both the beginning student and layman. It is not intended, however, for the use of the professional taxonomist doing critical work.

The author is assistant professor of biology and curator of the herbarium in the University of Colorado. The book developed from a mimeographed key to the Boulder County flora prepared for University of Colorado students. Friends working with the Colorado flora, in desperate need for up-to-date information, encouraged Weber to expand his set of keys to cover the Front Range area. This area includes the eastern slope of the Front Range between Rocky Mountain National Park and Pike's Peak, and ranges in elevation from 5,000 feet to 14,000 feet. Approximately 1,300 species, or almost one half of the total number found in Colorado, occur here. The usefulness of the handbook, however, is extended considerably beyond the limits of the Front Range because of similarity in the flora throughout the mountainous areas of the state.

This handbook was completed several years ago, but financial difficulties prevented immediate publication. The necessity for most authors of regional floras to meet a substantial part of the cost of publication has delayed the appearance of many such books and prevented the publication of several. Dr. Weber fortunately found the solution to this problem in the University of Colorado Press, which is initiating book publication. Nevertheless the book must be reviewed with the realization that many